

July 2004

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Andrew Hesse/Editor

Last month we asked you whether you take gadgets with you on vacation or if you prefer to unplug. I suppose it's only natural that as readers of HUB Digital Living, you subscribe to something of a digital lifestyle: the ever widening swaying of your interests said that to unplug is neither viable. The utopian vision for the future was one where technology would take over doing all the mental work both at home and on the road: we should be riding around in flying cars, being waited on hand and foot by robot butlers, and doing all of our shopping — grocery and otherwise — using vending machines, according to some past predictions. More recent (though still dated) predictions say that we should be getting everything we need from the Internet and somehow getting rid of the process.

Tech is designed to make our lives easier and simpler. Whether it has succeeded or not is a matter for debate. Many of us can't even imagine being productive without a computer or the assorted gadgets and gear that keep us in touch on the move. Extending the use of gadgets from work to recreation is logical. Why give over means of paper maps when planning or taking a vacation when the same (and often more) data is available online, on software packages and even on the palm of your hand and is accessible to boot? Add a GPS system and it's a little bad, but if you're on track on a family road trip. Why not keep in touch with the office using a cell phone and Wi-Fi Internet connection while on vacation?

Forget that last point. Happy vacationing.
— Andrew Hesse, Editor

Meg Louie writes: The term "gadgets" covers a lot of territory. What I bring along on vacation depends on the gadget. I definitely don't bring along things that would "plug" me into the off/phone environment such as laptops, cell phones or pagers. However, other gadgets are indispensable. Frank Song writes: I would like to unplug. There's nothing scheduled for gadgets on my vacation. Ideally, vacation for me means being everywhere of modern society. Higon breakaway tent as. My first thought upon reading this month's topic was "of course I take my technology with me on vacation. It's because of this stuff that I can go on vacation!" With my cell phone, laptop, and Internet connection, I'm just as close to New York, London, and Paris from my cottage as I am from the office.

Ralfen Lough writes: I got my first laptop computer about four years ago. On a trip to the U.S., I found it invaluable. I had a ready facility on hand to do accurate travel planning, with the installed version of Microsoft Streets and Trips to assist in the production of exact log travel directions. It was also useful for the kids, as I had brought a supply of movies that could be played on [the laptop] in the back of the car.

Letter of the Month

The winner of this month's letter contest is Ulika Binks:

Once upon a time I used to throw a change of clothing, a floating knife, a compass, a few coast of beans, and a fishing pole in a backpack, strap a canoe on the roof of my car, and take off for the North Country for a few days that constituted a great holiday. Things change. Unplugged you say? In today's world? Today my canoe has morphed into an R1, 1000-horse cruise ship and the beans have been replaced by gourmet dining and unlimited buffet meals. Instead of a compass, I now carry a GPS system so I can check on the ship's position in the Caribbean Sea. I also need digital watch with dual time zones so I don't oversleep and miss the all-day breakfasts. It is a data watch of course, because I need the phone numbers and email addresses of all my friends family so that I can give them a daily report of my vacation. To that end, I also brought the universal cyber cable so that I can delete all the spam from my email before I get home. Unplugged, you say? No way!

For her submission, Ulika won the Ultimate Dell Print Primer Give Away from Dell Canada. There are still more Dell Print Primer prizes to be won so keep those letters coming.

This month, in addition to feedback on the issue, tell us **whether you take your gadgets on vacation with you or if you prefer to unplug**. Drop us a line at letters@hubbcanada.com. To mark the one-year anniversary of Dell Inc.'s printer series, the winner will receive the **Ultimate Dell Print Primer Give Away**, a Dell X340 All-in-One Inkjet Printer, a high-end printer, scanner, and PC-free colour copier with PC fax capability, two extra ink cartridges (black and colour), a 3 in USB 2.0 cable, and a pack of Dell Premium Inkjet paper for full-colour prints.

DELL



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Ultimate notebook meets virtual office



In our search for the perfect combination of size and performance, we came up with the X-Note series – notebooks that make no compromises. Starting with an Intel Centrino processor, we added one of the brightest LCD screens on the market, a 10-hour extended life battery* and a Quad Band wireless antenna, all packed into an ultra slim titanium and carbon fibre package that weighs a mere 2.4 kgs.

Now, virtual office doesn't have to mean virtual performance.



*Based on the IEC standard test method. Actual battery life may vary depending on usage. For more information, please visit the LG website at www.lg.com. © 2007 LG Electronics. All rights reserved.

If your love of surround sound is not shared by family members or close neighbours, a new line of headphones from VO Magic (www.vomagic.com) may help you enjoy your audio and keep the peace. The line's debut product, the Sound Assault 5.1 Channel Surround Sound Headphones, comes with a power amplifier that acts as a central station, has eight independent speakers, and connects to a 5.1-enabled PC, home audio system, or DVD player. The hardware comes bundled with WinDVD and WinPlay software, the former for watching Dolby Digital surround sound enabled DVDs on a PC and the latter for converting standard stereo music into simulated 5.1 channel surround sound. The headphones set has volume controls for each channel, built-in bass/nibble effects, dual head-phone outputs for multiple users, and supports DMS playback on AC3 and DTS formats. The Sound Assault bundle is available now for \$135.*



*Converted from US dollars.

Sound Assault Headphones



Click. Tiny time reports. Microsoft Canada (www.microsoft.ca) has announced that its Smart Personal Objects Technology (SPOT) watches have finally made a run for the border. The wristwatches from Possil and Sanyo feature a screen that scans FM airwaves for information addressed to them. With an MDA Direct (www.mdadirect.com/) subscription, users personalize the information and services they want to receive and downloading updates from CBC/Radio Canada, ESPN, MSNBC, and The Wall Street Journal, as well as MSN Messenger messages and Microsoft Outlook calendar appointments is seamless. The MDA Direct service is available in Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Rochester, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec City, Toronto, Vancouver, and Victoria. Prices for the watches, which are expected to be available through most major Canadian electronics retailers by press time, vary depending on make and model. The first month of MDA Direct service is free, after which subscribers have the choice of paying \$14.95 a month or \$69 for a full year.

MDA Direct SPOT watches

Though Apple (www.apple.ca) has long helped Mac users cut the cord with its AirPort networking devices, it has now extended the lead of wireless to PC users. The recently announced AirPort Express is a compact, portable wireless base station that can plug directly into the wall for wireless Internet and data transfer, as well as streaming audio. The base station—which supports 802.11g and 802.11b standards—has analogue and digital audio outputs that can be connected to a stereo. The included AirPort music networking software then wirelessly streams iTunes audio files located on a wireless-enabled Windows or Mac PC that's within the network's range (45 m in ideal conditions) through the connected stereo system. Apple says multiple base stations can be bridged together to extend the wireless range. The AirPort Express base station will be available in July (subject to Canadian regulatory approval) for \$129.



AirPort Express

With speakers getting ever smaller and fewer, there's only a matter of time before they disappear. That time has come with the development of purSonic by German firm Puren GmbH. PurSonic (www.purens.com) is a P system that vibrates transducers that can be fitted into walls, floors or ceilings. Sound generators on the reverse side of the soundboards vibrate to create sound when they receive signals from a digital processor. Many standard home stereo or surround sound setups have a "sweet spot," but Puren says purSonic distributes audio more widely and evenly because the



emission angles of the vibrating surfaces are almost double the width of standard speakers. As well, the frequencies can be fine-tuned to the surface materials behind which the sound boards are concealed, whether its plaster, carpet, tile, or wood. While Puren is pitching purSonic to home users, the technology does require custom installation.

purSonic

FAMILY RADIOS

You may have seen familiar or tips to the amusement park or camp ground keeping in contact using a modern take on walkie-talkies.

Family Radio Service (FRS) is essentially a small frequency block (from 462.5625 MHz to 467.7125 MHz) that can be used for family communication over the distance. "FRS was the original radio service allowed in the U.S. and Canada for users to communicate over the distance without licensing fees or anything like that," says Sally Korman, senior director of consumer product management for Cobra Electronics, a manufacturer with a family extensive line of FRS and other radios. FRS incorporates 34 channels in the frequency block.

General mobile radio service (GMRS) is a newer standard in the same category as FRS and with the same basic feature set. Where GMRS differs, however, is in frequency range and potential power: the higher the power (in Watts), the larger the potential range. The FRS standard limits radios to 0.5 Watts. "With 0.5 Watts of power, your maximum range is about 3 miles (4.8 km). In optimum conditions," Korman says, "with GMRS you can actually go up to 5 Watts."

The GMRS standard has yet to be approved for Canadian use, but is expected to be implemented in September. While the American Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has already approved the standard, firms are required by law to buy a license to use it. Canadian regulations aren't expected to require a license, Korman says.

GMRS offers seven channels with FRS and adds 15 of its own for a total of 22 channels.

As an open frequency range, neither FRS nor GMRS are suitable for private conversations, despite the fact that many retailers (especially online retailers) sometimes refer to individual channel codes within the larger channel as scrambling or privacy codes. Privacy codes don't block other users from hearing your conversation so much as they eliminate the noise and potential confusion of a number of people talking in the same channel. If, for example, you're communicating on channel 5 with code 34 activated, anyone listening to the same channel and code can hear your conversations. Similarly, anyone listening to channel 5 without any codes activated can hear all communications on that channel, regardless of whether codes are activated.

Following are some FRS/GMRS products we had a chance to test in the field.

The PR145 is the least expensive in Cobra's line at about \$50 for a two-pack. As a budget radio, the PR145 sacrifices functionality in order to keep the price down. A tiny LCD shows which channel users are on and that's all. Without any form of light for the display and lacking significant range, the usability of the PR145 radios is limited. A PR145 "value pack" is now available on the Cobra Web site, which includes some of the functionality one comes with a display, charger, illuminated display, privacy codes, key pad lock, belt clip, etc.

Small size and a budget conscious price tag make the PR145 a tempting proposition for first-time FRS buyers. However, its limited range and overall lack of features mean it won't be long before users start thinking about an upgrade.

Model: PR145

Standard: FRS/GMRS

Price: \$49.99 (2 pack)

Range*: 3 km (3.1 miles)

Pros:

- Inexpensive
- Simple operation
- GMRS capability

Cons:

- No features beyond talk
- No privacy channel codes
- Exaggerated range

Cobra Electronics

The PR245 is the next step up in Cobra's line and offers privacy codes (20 per channel), channel scanning, belt clip, key lock, rechargeable batteries and a range extender that, in effect, turns off static squelch to allow weak transmissions to come through. If purchased as a pair, the PR245 comes with a side-by-side desk top cradle charger.

Relative to other radios tested, the plastic casing of the PR245 feels too thin and the radio as a whole doesn't feel terribly robust, making it less suited to outdoor applications like camping and hiking and perhaps better suited to amusement parks and the like. The PR245 is fairly well featured and as an added bonus, its options are fairly easy to understand without reading the manual.

Model: PR245

Standard: GMRS/FRS

Price: \$79.99 (2 pack with charger)

Range*: 30 km (18.6 miles)

Pros:

- Well featured
- Well priced
- Rechargeable batteries

Cons:

- Casing feels flimsy
- Exaggerated range

With a fairly rugged design, rechargeable battery, a drop-in desktop cradle charger, quick-release belt clip, and solid design, the T6400 was among the most functional of the radios tested despite the fact that it is FRS only, which limits the radio to 14 channels.

A top-mounted volume control knob is a practical addition, allowing the volume to be adjusted while the unit is still attached to the belt clip.

Unfortunately, the radio is lacking in range; the package states a maximum range of 3.2 km. That said, Motorola's range test notes seem to be more realistic than other radios tested, though our range tests were all in a city environment.

Motorola

Adding weather alerts, extra channels (owing to the DMR standard), vibrating call alerts and a very rugged weather-proof design, the T6500 is the best of the radios tested, though the added functionality comes at a price.

A ribbed case and very sturdy design make the radio can stand up to a lot of punishment, it not only stood up to the drop test, but the newly conceived lens test, something I wouldn't even consider trying on the other radios tested. The T6500's range (as stated by Motorola) is 8 km in optimum conditions.

That said it has the simplest to operate: tuning in a channel, adjusting the volume, and choosing a group/code are simple and won't require users read the manual, however, other functions aren't as easy to access and will require some studying on the user end.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the T6500 is its belt clip design. The radio is released by pushing a large button on the top of the clip. Removing it is easy enough, but trying to get the 1.4-inch diameter hole to line up with the catch requires a lot of fumbling.

Audiovox

The Audiovox GMRS9030 is not well suited to outdoor applications owing to its delicate casing, large and flimsy battery cover and the fact that it isn't weather-proofed. Its belt clip is by far the most practical of the lot as tested, using a metal rivet on the back of the radio to slide into the top of the belt clip to lock. Removing it is equally simple.

As entry radio, the GMRS9030 could be a good choice given the included ear bud microphone and hands-free voice activation. Functionally, however, the small and sometimes hard to find "talk" button (owing to the fact that a smaller "monitor" button is situated directly below "talk"), and what seems like a dot-cube overall design limit the radio's appeal.

The stakes against the GMRS9030 are reinforced by the fact that it is a full featured radio with a relatively low price, incorporating internal hands-free operation with voice activation, weather alerts, and the like.

By Andrew Hower-Colepe

Model: Motorola T6400
Standard: FRS
Price: \$25.99 (2 pack with charger)
Range:* 3.2 km (2.0 miles)

Pros:
-Sturdy
-Top-mounted volume control
-Currently available and legal to use in Canada

Cons:
-FRS standard limits available channels
-Limited range



Model: Motorola T6500
Standard: FRS/DMR
Price: \$125.99 (2 pack with charger)
Range:* 8 km (5 miles)

Pros:
-Very robust
-Cool design
-Weather alerts

Cons:
-Expensive
-Heavier than most tested
-Extra functions hard to access



Model: Audiovox GMRS9030
Standard: FRS/DMR
Price: \$55.99 (2 pack with charger)
Range:* 36.1 km (20 miles)

Pros:
-Isolated microphone and fuel
-Light weight
-LED flash light

Cons:
-Thin plastic casing
-No weatherproofing
-Exaggerated range



* From manufacturer specifications in optimum conditions.

Digital family tree



For the record

Following are the genealogist's questions to ask, when developing an archive of your family history:

- Where and when did you ancestor live?
- When and where was he or she born or married?
- When did he or she die?
- When and where were children born?
- What were your ancestors' relationships to other people?
- Are there previous places of residence?

Source: HP Creative Projects

Tech tools help genealogists present family stories in new ways

Researching your roots is a perfect family project for the long summer stretching out ahead of you — especially if your vacation plans include spending time with relatives. And getting the kids involved can not only sharpen their research and interviewing skills, it can foster a genuine curiosity and interest in the stories of their own family.

The growth of the Internet has been largely responsible for the explosion in genealogy as a hobby, but it is not the only digital tool available to serious researchers. There are now many software and services available to help you gather data as well as options for publishing the finished product.

Hunting and gathering

Harriet Packard's Creative Projects Web site (www.hp.co, click on Home and Home Office, then Creative Projects) in the lower right corner (includes a number of basic genealogy articles that can help you get started gathering data).

It suggests that you begin by collecting all of the basic information about close relatives — full names, dates and places of births, marriages, deaths, and other major family events — then work back to the previous generation, and so on. In addition to official records, also pay attention to things like book endowments, quilts, and even furniture.

You can use a digital camera to "recreate" the target items and a scanner for the smaller flat objects, from photographs, to pages of letters or diaries, and jewelry — and, of course, family photographs and documents. (If you don't have a scanner at home, go to a business service company like Kinko's, where you pay an hourly fee to use a computer and scanner.) These keep-alives and memorabilia can be used to add color and interest to your finished product.

When interviewing relatives for your project, use a digital voice recorder or, even better, a digital video camera if your subjects are willing. And don't limit your questions to dates and facts, taking advantage of the technology to get your older relatives to tell you stories about their childhood or personal memories or events that shaped history. You may not have to even purchase a voice recorder. If you already have a iPod or MP3 player with a voice note feature, you can use it to record interviews in a digital audio format. If you have access to old video recordings or film, considering transferring those to a digital format. In the case of audio (depending on its age), you can probably do it yourself (see "Salvation for your files" story" also in this issue), but you'll probably need to take film to a service bureau that specializes in film-to-video transfers.

Editing and publishing

The research and collection stage can be endless, so it's a good idea to set a goal for your project when you start — you can always add more information later.

Once (or better, as) you've collected your information and transferred it to your PC — by scanning, recording, or creating text or database files — make sure you back your data up. Copy it to DVDs or CDs and keep a spare copy at a location other than your home. You might want to check out an online archive service like Internet.org, which charges a nominal fee based on the amount of data stored.

How you share your mountain of information, however, will be



based on how you plan to publish it.

Though much of the off-the-shelf genealogy software is not very helpful to Canadians for research purposes, there are gems that include some great publishing templates and tools. Heritage Family Tree Deluxe (US\$29.95, www.heritagefamilytree.com), for example, includes a wide selection of tools for formatting information as in print and online. Of particular interest is the WebCollaborator feature, which lets more than one family researcher work on a project over the Internet.

Other genealogy software options include Family Tree: Quick & Easy, US\$19.95, www.familytreequickandeasy.com, Legacy Family Tree, US\$39.95 (download), www.legacyfamilytree.com, and Roots Magic, US\$29.95 (free demo), rootsmagic.com. There are also several tools that weren't developed specifically for genealogists, but which can help you present your information in new and interesting ways.

One of these is Easy Media Creator 7 from Roxio (www.roxio.com). It is actually a suite of Roxio's photo, audio, and video software — Easy CD & DVD Creator, PhotoSuite 7 Platinum, and VideoMovie 7 Professional — that allows you to import, edit, and combine files using a single interface. With it, you can create a slideshow of family photographs and combine it with an audio track using voice recordings as well as favourite music. Or, import the digital-video clips of your new-niece with Janet Aune Rebe's talking about her first years as a school teacher, crop out the background, and overlay her "talking head" on a slideshow of pictures of her with her students. It's fairly simple to achieve a documentary-like result that truly adds life to your family history. The finished files can be optimized for streaming viewing on the Web, or burned to CD or DVD. The software is \$39 and can be downloaded from Roxio's Web site.

Research resources

The Internet has been a boon to genealogists to the point that the challenge in tracking your family roots today is no longer the lack of information, it's sifting through the vast number of records and databases.

www.genealogy.gc.ca

A good online resource for Canadians is a site developed by the federal Heritage Ministry. The Canadian Genealogy Centre Web site provides links to a wide variety of federal records and documents (census returns from as far back as 1850), military records, immigration databases, western land grants, and records of Home Children. Though you can't actually search many of these records online, it tells you what records are available and how to consult them.

Recent updates to the site include a guide to researching Aboriginal ancestry and lists of Unsettled genealogical websites from 1915 to 1932.

Roxio Inc.

www.rootsweb.com

This Web site is home to extensive interactive guides and research tools. Though it was developed by a U.S.-based company, MyFamily.com, it includes sections with extensive international resources. The WorldConnect Project, for example, contains more than 200 million ancestor names. RootsWeb is a collection of databases — official, as well as those developed and submitted by other genealogy enthusiasts — that can be searched for free. RootsWeb's success is based on user participation and there is no shortage of that. MyFamily.com says that the RootsWeb Summary List now contains more than a million summaries that have been submitted by more than 225,000 online genealogists. In addition to databases, visitors can link to genealogy mailing lists, message boards, and to Web sites of other amateur genealogists who posted their family trees online.

—Megan Johnston



would be using your own printer, or having spiral-bound copiers produced at a business service center like Kinko or Staples. For a more professional result, however, consider premium desktop services. Popular among self-published authors, these services are increasingly being used by amateur genealogists, according to a representative of Instabook Canada (www.instabook.ca).

Self-publishers provide the company with an electronic file of their finished book and cover design (usually in PDF format), as well as their choice of variables — page size, type of binding, choice of stock for cover, and more. They then print the requested number of copies and ship the copies to you. You can order reprints as required. Instabook's basic self-publishing package is \$249 for one proof and 50 copies of a book of up to 400 pages. At about \$22 per copy, it's fairly reasonable if you plan to distribute that number of books. CafePress (www.cafepress.com) also offers print-on-demand books. There is no minimum number of books with this service; you pay a per-page rate on top of a flat fee for each book you order — both rates vary depending on the type of binding selected. To set up your book, you have to create a CafePress account, which is actually an online store. From it, you or your relatives can order copies of your book and have them shipped directly to the desired recipient.

By Megan Johnston

Press print

Inkjets and resources for creative projects

As early as the 19th century, keeping young minds and hands active over the long summer break can be a challenge — hence the tie-dyed t-shirts, dreamcatchers, and other seasonal crafts that come home with returning campers. Not only will crafts keep kids busy, they are a great way to encourage their creativity. Over the years, crafters have taken advantage of the home computer, incorporating that technology into their creative projects, especially those that involve photography. The inkjet printer is now an important tool in the creative hobbyist's arsenal.

Recently, we looked at some inkjet printers from Epson (www.epson.com) that are available for a range of projects. All of these are Mac and Windows compatible, and, in addition to drivers, come with third-party software for both platforms.

Epson Stylus Photo R300

Suggested retail price: \$259

With the explosion of digital photography, more home printers have built-in slots for digital camera media. The Stylus Photo R300 is the newest such printer from Epson, with slots for CompactFlash, MemoryStick, SmartMedia, SecureDigital/MMC, and all removable cards — which means you can print without connecting to a computer. The PC-free printing capability is further enhanced by the USB connector on the front of the printer, which allows you to connect directly to a digital camera or external drive (a USB key or Zip drive, for example). No special drivers are required as long as the device functions as an external hard drive; the printer recognizes it. The R300 is a six-colour printer, and — like all of the Epson printers reviewed here — it has individual tanks for each colour. A nice touch, as you don't have to replace a cartridge just because you've run out of one colour.

The LCD menu system allows you to make an index print and select only the images you want to print (along with allowing you to select from an extensive list of finishing options for your paper type, size, page layout, and more). There's also a menu option to print only those previously selected on the camera. via DPOF. If you have a PhotoBridge enabled camera, you can control printing options from the camera instead of the printer. The other really nice feature with the R300 is a special CD tray just plug index with a blank label into the carrier and stick across the slot on the front of the printer, and you can print directly onto your CDs.

Printer projects

If you have an inkjet printer, chances are it comes with software for creative projects: a basic image editor for tweaking photos before printing or templates for creating greeting cards and calendars, for example. If you've exhausted those, or are looking for additional projects, there are similar resources available online for free. Just remember to stock up on ink and paper before you start.

EP Creative Projects page

www.epson.com

The best of these free resources is from Haslett/Pacific Canada. From the home page, select Home and Home Office, then click on the Creative Projects link in the bottom-right corner. The extensive list of projects and prints includes party kits for specific events or holidays, photo frames, designs for homemade cards and greeting cards, and even templates for fabric projects like beachbody models.

Microsoft Home magazine

www.microsoft.com/home/mag/

This Web site is home to how-to and product reviews for the home computer user. The how-to section includes articles with templates for various projects and crafts, such as making shadow puppets using an inkjet and card stock or customizing a notebook again with image transfer paper. Though some projects suggest using specific Microsoft software like Picture It, they are basic enough that a similar program — in this case, another image editor — could easily be substituted.

National Geographic

www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/

From the Kid's page, click on Activities and Experiences to find content that includes coloring book pages, a book mark history (pictured below), and more. The printable coloring pages feature different wild animals in their environments. This section has links to e-zine articles and articles on the same animals in *Nat Kids Magazine*.

—Megan Johnston



Continued
on page 11



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HUB Glossary PC terms

AGP (accelerated graphics port)

A dedicated connector on a motherboard designed for high-performance graphics components. Standard on new machines. On older machines, it is the brown slot between white PCI slots and processor. AGP slots often feature a multipin designation indicating how fast the card is in comparison to the original AGP specification. Newer cards are rated 4X or 8X.

CMOS (complementary processor unit)

The heart of every computer and the component that does most of the computation. Major brands include Intel's Pentium line, which is the most popular; AMD's Athlon line, which also has a substantial following; Intel's Celeron line, which provides scaled-back performance at a scaled-back price; and Transmeta's Crusoe, which is a power-friendly processor offering modest performance.

DDR SDRAM

A type of memory designed to provide twice the speed of older SDRAM. DDR, or Double Data Rate, memory may be rated by the speed of the computer bus it inhabits (DDR333, DDR400, etc.) or by its theoretical bandwidth, in GB/sec (PC3150, PC3700, etc.). Works only in memory slots designed for DDR and is incompatible with older SDRAM.

GB (gigabyte)

One billion bits of information.

Continued on page 7

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GHz (gigahertz)

One billion hertz. A measure of speed used common for both radio waves and processor speeds. A radio signal rated at one GHz features one billion cycles per second, allowing high-speed transfer of information. A processor rated at one GHz allows a data signal to pass through it a billion times a second. (Note: this is not the same as processing a billion bits of information per second.)

IDE (Integrated drive electronics)

Type of interface used to connect a hard drive to a motherboard.

KB (kilobyte)

1,000 bytes of information

MB (megabyte)

1,000,000 bytes of information


MHz (megahertz)

1,000,000 Hertz. Used to measure both radio waves and processor speeds. (See GHz)

PC Card (PCMCIA)

Type of slot found on most notebook computers, and is a method of connecting additional devices to the computer, including external hard drives and optical drives, removable memory (CF, SD, MemoryStick, SmartMedia and more can be used as external "drives" by using an adapter), wireless networking cards, and more.

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11. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 283: 2686-2692.

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Summary

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continued from page 37

RAM (random access memory)
Short-term memory used by your computer for immediate usage by your system, when your computer is shut down, the memory is wiped. Modern desktop computers use one of three types of RAM: SDRAM, DDR SDRAM, or RDRAM.

SDRAM (Synchronous RAM)
A type of random access memory found in computer systems. SDRAM is typically found in older systems (lower comput-

ers have moved to DDR memory, for the most part), and is noted by the speed of the memory on the motherboard, in MHz (PC100, PC133).

Serial ATA

Serial ATA is a style of hard drive connector that uses a serial connection rather than parallel, the type of connection is Plug and Play following you to connect new drives while the computer is still running! and uses a very small flexible cable instead of the wider ribbon cable found on older hard drives.

VGA (video graphics adapter)

This can appear on your computer either as a discrete graphics card that can be replaced or as a component that is directly attached to the motherboard. The VGA connector is a 15-pin connector (also known as D-Sub), that is bright blue on most modern computers. This connector is used to hook up your monitor.

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Epson Stylus Photo R2600

Suggested retail price: \$499

With the addition of a limited scanner, the Photo R2600 expands the creative possibilities of an inkjet printer. (Like the R300, it has a wide range of features for PC live printing, photo for digital camera media, USB connect, LCD for previewing images and managing print menus, and support for FireWire-enabled cameras.)

Some of the same features also allow for PC live scanning of slides, photos, or documents, and for saving scanned images directly to many any disks or other backup devices (i.e. writers or portable hard drives, for example) connected to the R2600 via the USB link. The scanner offers 48 bit scanning (2,400x4,800 dpi) for plenty of detail. And if you're scanning old photos that have faded, the included Easy Photo Fix software can help restore some of their original quality.

The printer portion of this all-in-one [it also functions as a colour photo copier] uses six ink colours, adding light cyan and light magenta to the standard cyan, magenta, yellow and black inks [the same combination as the R300].

The R2600 is not only big in the options it offers to creative types, it's just plain big. However, if you don't already own a scanner, this all-in-one is definitely worth carving out a little extra space on your desktop.



Continued from page 12

Epson Stylus Photo 2200

Suggested retail price: \$399

If you want to make standard-sized prints at home, most inkjet printers will do the job fairly well, but when you move into larger-sized prints you may want to look at a higher-end printer. The Stylus Photo 2200 is designed to handle prints as big as 13x19 inches using the included paper roll attachment, and 15x27 and 13x19 inch sheets using its standard paper support. It can also output borderless prints in a variety of sizes, from 4x6 up to 13 x 19-inch, so you don't have to get the cutters out. The seven-colour printer [in addition black, as well as interchangeable photo and matte blacks] uses Epson's UltraChrome archival inks, so resulting prints should hold up well to ambient light — up to 100 years, according to Epson. This model is bound to be very appealing to photographers and anyone who loves the possibilities of printing on a larger canvas.

By Sean Connolly and Megan Johnson

Crossword Factory 3
www.schoothouse.com
Price: \$49.99 (download),
\$59.99 (boxed)



Three across, five down

To a student or career specialist, the words education and fun may not be synonymous, but developer Schoothouse Technologies has done a good job of trying to make them so with its line of worksheet software.

Though the programs were designed as tools for teachers, they are available to the general public and do not require special systems or databases — just a PC running Windows [98 or later or NT4 or later] and an inkjet or laser printer.

We looked at Crossword Factory 3, which, as the name suggests, allows you to generate crossword puzzles. The software was easy to install and quickly start generating customized puzzles.

Creating a crossword starts with selecting a word list. The software comes with several word lists, with clues [and you can download more at the company Web site] or you can add your own lists — names of local bars and haunts if you're spending the summer at the cottage, names of destinations on your summer road trip, characters and places in a favourite book, for example. You can add your own clues or use the definitions included in the Crossword Factory's

10,000 word English dictionary (which has both U.S. and U.K. spellings), French, Spanish, and German dictionaries (and offer the download from the Schoothouse site, if you want to create puzzles for developing vocabularies in those languages).

The next step is choosing the Crossword Layout, which is an evolution of the words in a puzzle format with the clues on the inner part of the page. If you aren't happy with the results, click Crossword Layout — and again, if desired — and it will generate a different layout. The interface is quite intuitive, allowing you to adjust the size of words and whether or not more than one puzzle at a time. The design elements are also for a command if you don't like the default look of the page: change or delete headers and footers, add images in special instructions, change the font, size, or color of text, and change the size of the crossword squares. Last step, click Print, and make it as many copies as you need.

Schoothouse Technologies makes a whole galaxy of stellar worksheet workbooks, including Schoothouse Rings, Map Worksheet Planner, and Mathematics Worksheet Planner. Demo and trial versions can be downloaded at the Schoothouse Web site.

—Megan Armstrong

Digital Photography Tutorial 6

Working with an image editor 2: Colour by the numbers

The images created by most digital cameras use RGB colour mode, which is an additive colour model. This means various combinations of red, green and blue light combine to form all of the colours that a digital camera is capable of recording. These are defined in 256 possible values for each colour — at least in 8-bit mode. If a pixel has a value of 0 for red, green, and blue, it will be black. Likewise, if the values are all at 255, it will be pure white. In fact, identical values for red, green, and blue, whatever they may be, create neutral grey. The bigger those identical numbers the lighter the grey (middle greys are 128 128 128).

Hues are created in an RGB image when the red, green, and blue values of a pixel are not the same. If you have image editing software installed on your PC, you can see this for yourself by opening an image and passing the cursor an eyedropper tool over it. There should be a readout somewhere (in Photoshop it's in the title, while Final Stop Pro's eyedropper has a small pop-up that gives these values). Here are a few of the many relationships you can easily observe. Dark areas have small values while light areas have big values. Big differences in the red, green, and blue values mean more colour while small differences in the RGB values will indicate less. Equal values for two and the absence of the third gives pure colours—for example, 8255 8255 80 is yellow.

In the accompanying photo of the bird of paradise, the darker parts of the orange petals read 8255 8143 80 while the lighter parts are 8255 8388 80. The darkest greens on the leaves read 790 8120 870.

Two areas that interested me most were the whitish tip on the blue tongue (8255 8255 8255) and the dark background, the lightest part of which read 840 864 888. Knowing these values, I could immediately do two things to improve this photo. Since the dark background and the white tip of the blue tongue contain no image detail worth preserving, why not set them to black (0 0 0) and white (255 255 255)? Not surprisingly, this is known as setting the black and white points,

and doing this allows the remaining values to expand and redistribute themselves.

Using the values above for setting the black and white points was for example only. In most cases at values of around 20, you can still see dark detail that you might want to keep, and setting the black point with such a relatively high value would render all those subtle details to black.

In this particular photo, however, I wanted the background to be pure black. I was in a botanical garden and placed the nearest thing to hand, my black fleece vest, behind the flower as a back stop to accomplish that. But my exposure was off so some of the areas of the vest came out dark grey. Picking the lightest of the greys as the black point rendered the entire background black, which is exactly what I wanted.

There's no little highlight in this image that setting the white point did not make much of a difference. After the adjustment, the colours became more vibrant and seemed to pop out, while the overall image had more contrast. And comparing prints made from the two images, the corrected one has a crisp three dimensional character to it that the uncorrected one lacks.

I made the above correction in Photoshop using the Levels tool, but most image editors have a similar tool that will allow you to accomplish the same thing. Along with setting the black and white points of your image, the Levels tool lets you set the mid-point. If you want to count the number of pixels in your image that had each of the 256 values and plotted them on a graph you'd have a histogram of your image. This is what you see when you open the Levels tool, along with a white, grey, and black sliders at the bottom of the graph. Moving the grey slider to the right tells the image editor that the values under the grey slider—for instance, 250—should become 128, which has the effect of darkening the whole image. Similarly, moving the grey pointer to the left tells the image editor that the darker values under the grey slider should be 128, which lightens the image.

By David Isaacs



Before



After

Long-term memory

If you're about to get a new digital camera, here's a not-so-well-kept secret: the memory cards that come with new digital cameras — if a card is included at all, that is — are generally low capacity and are only designed to get you started. If you're shooting at the highest resolution your camera allows, you may only be able to take a handful of shots before you have to run back to your computer to unload them. Whether or not your new camera comes with a card, you should seriously consider setting aside a few extra dollars for a higher capacity card, if only for the convenience.

When purchasing a new memory card, it's important to remember that not all memory cards are equal: speed-wise. Older cards are often slower, whether you're getting CompactFlash, SecureDigital, Memory Stick, or another type.

If you're planning to buy a high-resolution digital camera, you'll want to make sure you have a card that can save data quickly enough to avoid long wait times between capturing images. Some manufacturers will list the speed rating as a multiple (4X, 12X etc.), while others will have listed numbers that indicate improved performance (for example, Ultra Extreme Pro, or Data).

When in doubt, talk with one of the staff at your local digital camera centre to get the low down.

Here is the main types of memory currently available:

CompactFlash

The older standard of the memory technologies still in widespread use, CompactFlash (CF) is physically the largest of the formats, but also offers the highest-capacity cards, at 4 GB and counting. CF tends to be a bit more rugged than the alternatives. And though it's disappearing in many entry-level cameras in favour of SecureDigital, CF is still popular in cameras aimed to the pros. The (B&W) photo microscope is a mechanical drive that offers up to 4 GB of storage space in a Type II CF format, which is slightly thicker than standard Type I CF.

Memory Stick

Favoured by Sony and compatible mostly with Sony and Sanyo products, the Memory Stick (MS) is roughly the size and shape of a stick of gum, but it has far more storage capacity: up to 1 GB using the MS Pro format. For portable devices, there's the compact Memory Stick Duo (in sizes up to 128 MB), which comes with a leave-adapters for use in full-size Memory Stick slots.

SecureDigital

The bright new light in the world of digital camera media, SecureDigital (SD) and its older uncorrupted sibling (MMC) offers a smaller form factor with a built-in, allowing you to have smaller devices and write

protected cards. Cards currently top out at 512 MB, but 1 GB and higher capacity cards are on the roadmap for the near future.

or

Using FujiFilm and Olympus, all is the smallest of the digital camera memory types — barely larger than a thumbnail — but it can hold up to 512 MB of data. The big downside is that it's so small it can be hard to manipulate with your fingers if you're writing or erasing, and it is easier to misplace than other types of memory.

By Sean Conrath

Select a link for more memory info

www.sandisk.com
www.fujifilm.com
www.kodak.com
www.sanyo.com
www.sony.com
www.olympus.com
www.fujifilm.co



When speed counts!

Even memory cards at the same level only do you have different capacities and different performance levels, there are also two different types of technologies inside those little plastic shells. Much of the flash memory available right now uses multi-level cell technology, which manages space efficiently but isn't quite as fast as single-level cell technology.

We got our hands on a few samples of single-cell SecureDigital memory from: (1) Electrocast, Inc. (www.electrocast.com) and ran a few speed tests using a USB card reader. We took 50 5 MB of data — 50 picture files at roughly 1.5 MB each — which was copied to remove 10 cards to compare speeds.

As it turns out, the ATP card were noticeably faster than the high-performance cards from the competitors: the 512 MB ATP card wrote the data in 6.5 seconds, while it took the standard SanDisk card 32 seconds and the SanDisk Extreme card 11 seconds. Kingston's Data Pro card wrote the files in 17.5 seconds.

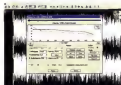
All of these are pretty impressive numbers for removable media, but photographers who want to get data onto the card as quickly as possible will probably appreciate the right edge of the single-cell cards, despite their smaller capacity.

Salvation for your stax o' wax

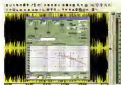
"Take that o' time rock 'n' roll," wails Bob Seger if that's you too, but your truly great languishes on stacks of scratchy, vinyl or worn-out cassettes, thank audio restoration. Glad noise has different characteristics than good sound, and audio restoration software separates the two by filtering certain patterns or frequencies in certain ways.



Clean Plus from Pinnacle Systems.
www.pinnacle.com Estimated price: \$119*



Diamond Cut DC Plus from Enhanced Audio.
www.enhancedaudio.com Estimated price: \$119*



Diamond Cut DC Plus from Enhanced Audio.
www.enhancedaudio.com Estimated price: \$119*

To prepare this article, we studied three audio restoration products: Clean Plus 4.0, Diamond Cut DC5, and Dart XP Pro.

Clean was developed by Steinberg but is now sold by Pinnacle Systems. It comes with Steinberg WaveLab Lite and a USB-powered pre-amplifier that you might need if you are using a phone turntable. Both Dart XP Pro and Diamond Cut DC5 are available for downloading from their respective developers.

Audio restoration is full of technical terms describing the characteristics of audio. To getting the most of those programs requires some understanding of these. Clean easily does the best job of shielding the noise from the signal. It uses an attractively shorn interface full of 3D-sculpted buttons and sliders. DC5 and Dart XP Pro have a lot more controls and offer a lot more power. DC5 uses the same style of interface panel for many of its filters and includes an extensive list of presets that can be highly specific. "early sholic: 98 yrs," for example. Of the three, Dart XP Pro is the least friendly to novices, although anyone familiar with audio technology terminology (e.g., high-pass, notch, FFT) will be on familiar ground.

turntable, and a hum filter removes the 60 Hz hum introduced by household electrical currents. Restoring music from tape is somewhat simpler, mainly involving the hiss and hum filters.

All three programs include controls that attack these problems singly or in combination. One of the most useful tools for cleaning up albums that are noisy from noise but otherwise relatively free from damage is the continuous noise filter. The software samples a portion that is "quiet" — at the beginning of the album or between tracks, for example — then uses that noise print as a filter.

Both Dart XP Pro and Diamond Cut DC5 allow you to take a noise print within the main workspace, then preview and modify the filter interactively before applying it. This feature is very useful because the noise print filter can be too aggressive and remove some of the good audio. Clean offers a set of presets but also allows you to make your own although you need to use WaveLab Lite and you can't modify it interactively.

The three packages also include other tools that allow you to rebalance left and right stereo signals, equalize frequencies, change the duration of a clip without altering the pitch, and add reverb or other spatial effects. Reverb is a lot of reverb, too, for example, can make an otherwise dull track.

To restore a typical collection of vinyl albums is reasonable shape, any of these will do a good job. Clean Plus's lower price, plus the inclusion of a pre-amp, make it a good value. For heavy-duty restoration (any vinyl case that has been worn and ratty 70s from the 1940s), I found myself using DC5 more than the rest.

By David Saville

*Converted from US\$79, US\$129 and US\$199, respectively.

Analogue to digital

There's more to digitizing analogue music than simply popping in a CD and hitting the tracks. For one thing it's a real-time process — it takes an hour to record an hour. And, of course, you need the appropriate turntable or tape player. You can generally connect a tape player's tape out jacks directly to your computer sound card's line in jack, using the appropriate Y-cable. With most computers, turntables, however, you'll need to go through an intermediate device called a pre-amplifier to avoid distortion.

Burning issue

Rise of recordable CDs and DVDs makes for another recycling dilemma

There was a time when disks were the computer's ultimate renewable consumable. Whether you used 5 1/4-inch or 5 1/8-inch floppy disks (or if you're graced enough, 8-inch floppies), the premise was the same: when ever you needed more room, you just deleted something to make space. Making use of what you had became an art. Among Apple II and Commodore 64 users, remember punching holes in their 5 1/8-inch floppies to take advantage of the unused Bp side. And before AOL software was distributed on CD, the sure millions of computer users were thankful for their phone floppies—it was like getting free office supplies in the mail.

Then came the CD, and suddenly reusing discs went out of style. Since you can't reuse CD-ROM or CD-R discs, the days of erasing your absolute data to make room for a quick backup are pretty much gone.

This leaves us with not one problem, but two. Fewer of us are using floppy disks, but many of us have minor warehouses full of them from computing years past languishing in our closets. At the same time, we're picking up CDs at a ridiculous pace. Consider the case of John Listerman and Jim McInerney, of El Centro, Calif., who have been collecting and unbranded AOL CDs as part of a project. In just 15 months, they'd amassed over 260,000—enough, if stacked, to just about reach the top of the CN tower. And that doesn't include the millions of CDs, AOL or otherwise, that get thrown out when they're no longer useful.

Getting floppies out of the house is just a matter of finding someone else who wants them—which, surprisingly, isn't as hard as it sounds. Schools, non-profits, churches, and community centers still have plenty of uses for them, provided you've kept them in good shape [giving someone a disk with a label you've written over several times is like donating an unlabeled second shirt to the Salvation Army].

By their nature, write-once CDs and DVDs are a bigger problem than floppies. You can't really give them away because they can't be reused, but most recycling facilities won't take them, despite the reusable plastic and metals the discs are made of— they're simply too difficult to take apart, compared to, say, a plastic milk jug.

I spent a considerable amount of time trying to find a Canadian company that would recycle CDs and DVDs from individuals, to no avail. In the U.S., however, there's GreenDisk [www.greendisk.com, which also recycles floppies], a Washington State-based company that serves individuals as well as corporations. The procedure is pretty simple: pack up your discs, download the recycling submission form online form, pay a nominal fee (\$50.00 per pound with a minimum charge of \$16.71), and mail them off.

When I spoke to GreenDisk founder, David Brachman, he explained that the CDs they reclaim are physically shredded then consolidated into a massive Sagled container. These containers are then transported, 40 at a time, to a plastics printer car where the material is used as, among other things, a compensating agent for automotive and appliance parts.

Oh, yeah—remember that stack of CDs I mentioned earlier? Just one of these Sagled containers holds more than four times as many. "We handled 60 million AOL discs alone in one go," Brachman said.

By Eric Townsend

*Converted from \$50.15, \$5.55, and \$5.40, respectively.

Eternal sunshine of the spotless disc

Before getting rid of your media, the usual rule: apply make sure they're unusable if you're giving them away, and under no circumstances should they contain any personal or sensitive information. Floppy disks are easy to deal with: there are many "disk shredder" programs on the market that will completely destroy your data (or you can get your hands on a degauser [otherwise known as a bulk eraser]). In a pinch, you can even use a speaker magnet.

Of course, there is no software solution for CDs and DVDs, and they don't act like magnets. That leaves hardware, like the Alera CD/DVD Shredder [www.alera.com]. The little black box—only slightly larger and heavier than a standard small office paper shredder—doesn't actually shred CDs to tiny bits; rather, it puts thousands of tiny impact marks on both sides of the disc you slide through it, rendering it unusable. The whole process takes about two seconds. Piece of mind is fairly affordable too: you can get it through mail-order or the Web for as little as \$529.

*Converted from \$550.00.



A family affair

Shared wireless plans help parents stay in touch with kids and keep a lid on costs

These days, you don't have to go far to see a teen sharing an hot or hot cellphone. In considering that a teenager generally needs to be able to sign a non-trust (and have a credit rating to boot), you might have wondered, where are all these phones coming from? For some teens, the answer lies in the new family cellphone packages that are becoming common offerings from the major cellular service providers.

Besides of being parents a way to appease nagging-cellphone-less teens, the plans can provide a more economical and streamlined way for the whole family to keep in touch, with benefits like unlimited calling between family members and a single invoice.

Though they might be the first group to spring to mind, teens and their parents are not the only demographic using family plans. They're also popular between spouses, siblings, and parents with younger children. Some service providers allow the family to be defined over a wide geographical area as well. In better cases, for example, family members can be anywhere in the province.

From shopping trips to field trips, the convenience of being able to call and pay "around me what we need from the produce aisle" and the security of being able to say "I got to school/practice safely" are both compelling reasons for parents to jump on the family plan bandwagon. Says Suzanne McMoran, manager of communications at Rogers Wireless, "Often more than one person in a household needs a phone, it is ideal."

Where did the concept of family plans come from? You might say it grew with the industry itself, according to Telus Mobility spokesperson Julia Quinlan. "The fact of who uses cellphones is ever evolving. There used to be a time when it was geared to the white-collar professional. That's no longer the case. People from every social and economic and age demographic are using cellphones. So we need to have plans that reflect that."

However, it's likely that the teenage potential for bad cellphone habits was also a factor in the growing popularity of these services. Parents want their kids to keep in touch but, as Quinlan puts it, they "don't want the kids to have carte blanche." A family's charges are listed on a single invoice, but they are broken down by cellphone so everyone can see who is hogging the minutes... or texting and down loading expensive ringtones.

While family plans appear to be marketed to parents, a great deal of cellphone accessory offers target teens directly. MacMillan and CIBC Telecommunications' new online store (shoponline.macmillan.com), which encourages visitors to "look out your phone with the freshest sounds around,"

is frequently updated with new ringtones and screen graphics for Bell Mobility, Rogers AT&T Wireless, and Telus Mobility subscribers. As American Idol addicts will attest, text messaging for interactive television, as just as a way to keep in touch, is also becoming widespread.

Although crassness on the Canadian wireless industry and not to be broken down by demographics, visible marketing towards younger users suggest that they are a significant force in the purchasing of wireless products.

"Teens are traditionally early adopters of new technology," says Marc Choma, director of communications for the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTa), adding that there are 13.5 million wireless subscribers in Canada, or 45 percent of the population. For families where one generation among those early adopters, family plans with all-in-one invoices provide a means of monitoring teenage exuberance for cellphones while still ensuring that loved ones are only a phone call away.

By Sue Rowland

The deal:

- While there are some differences between major companies, most family plans operate by allowing multiple family members (usually up to five) to share a "bucket" of minutes. Packages can also include unlimited local calls between phones on the plan, a phone for each member, separate phone numbers, and ringtones. Here are some other things to keep in mind when looking for a family plan:
- Sometimes so-called "unlimited" calling between phones has an actual cap, so make sure you ask.
- Family packages typically include a number of "free" phones, but due to often limited to one, with more phones usually available at a discount.
- Ask about other perks, including conference calling, call waiting, and free calls on birthdays.



Shaney Stewart/istockphoto.com

With all of the buzz about LCD and DLP this year, you may have forgotten about plasma: the technology that first made flat-screen TV fans weak in the knees. Well, Viewsonic (www.viewsonic.com) hasn't forgotten, and has continued to add to the plasma lineup, the latest model of which is the VPW4255. The 42-inch display with 1,624x1,024 native resolution supports all data sources and video signals, according to Viewsonic, including HDTV, Enhanced Definition Television, and standard television. It also features multiple inputs, including composite, component, S-video, analog RGB, and DVI/HD? Inputs can also simultaneously create, view, and compress picture-in-picture, split screen, or full-screen windows for viewing data, video, and TV signals. Viewsonic says it has also incorporated improvements in brightness, sharpness, and contrast into the new model. The VPW4255 will be available in July for suggested retail price of \$2,599.



Viewsonic VPW4255

The PDA/phones reviewed last month are a great solution for those who need to access email on the go, but with prices starting in the \$500 range, they aren't an option for every budget. Enter Dell's (www.dell.com) Axim X30 line, the top configuration of which runs a 624 MHz Intel processor and comes with built-in 802.11b and Bluetooth wireless connectivity. The former allows users to connect to the Internet when they're in range of a Wi-Fi network, and the latter when they talk via a Bluetooth-enabled cell phone. It runs Windows Mobile 2003 SE and features a 260x320 pixel, 3.5-inch display, slot for SD media cards, headphone jack, voice recording, and comes with a sync/recharge cradle with a slot for charging a spare battery (optional). This Axim X30 configuration is \$449.

Dell Axim X30 624 MHz



Card slot — no software required. (SanDisk makes its right-in-line card reader for desktop PCs.) The adapter is expected to ship in July for an estimated retail price of \$41.

One of the drawbacks of getting at acquisition can be the parallel acquisition of a different type of flash memory card for each device: xD for your camera, SD for your PDA, and Memory Stick for your DV camera, for example. The real challenge comes when you want to transfer data from these devices to your PC. SanDisk (www.sandisk.com) has announced that, in partnership with its 6-in-1 PC Card Adapter, which works SD, MMC, Memory Stick PRO, xD-Picture Card, and SmartMedia. The cards slide into a slot in the adapter, which then slides into the laptop computer's PC

*Converted from \$5 dollars

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JUNE PHOTO SPREE WINNER

THE WINNER:

Congratulations to **Al Papp of Elbert, Alberta** whose picture "Working the Curb" won the "sports" challenge in our bi-monthly Photo Spree contest.

As used a Lexmark Digital Select 83250 in (S.L.) 200 1500 to capture the image then cropped and adjusted inside in Adobe Photoshop CS. For his efforts, Al won a Lexmark 83250 All-in-One photo-quality printer, scanner and colour copier.



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THE RULES: You must use a digital camera to capture the subject. Work can be submitted via email contest@hubcanada.com. Accompanying your photo should be the name and email of the camera you used, the name of any software you used to modify the image and, if possible, the f-stop and shutter speed you used to take the photo.

Select your photographs, along with the information from the form below by August 13th, 2004. You can submit up to three photographs, all of which must be accompanied by a submission form. Entries must be submitted via email. Files should be no larger than 500 KB and no smaller than 200 KB. One photo per email.

Content: Rules (Prizes must be received by September 15th, 2004). Winners must provide valid identification upon claiming prize. The prize awarded cannot be transferred and cannot be redeemed for cash. To enter and to be eligible to win, persons must be residents of Canada and not employees of its subsidiaries or of employees of Piccolo Publishing, its affiliate companies, or subsidiary or professional agencies. The winners will be selected by 8:00 on August 13th, 2004 from among all eligible entries received on or before contest close date. Winners will be contacted by telephone or email. In the event that they cannot be contacted within the first week following the contest another entrant will be selected. All entries become the property of HUB and may be used to subsequent advertisements for the contest. All entries must be submitted by their artist and must be original work.

HUB's Photo Spree contest form. All submissions must contain this information. Send to contest@hubcanada.com

Deadline: August 13th, 2004

Name: _____

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E-Mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

Age: _____

Occupation/School: _____

Title of Entry: _____

Camera Used: _____

Software Used: _____

Lost in Translation? Games and the movies

A long time ago in a galaxy not too far away, studios realized that movie merchandise is a good way to squeeze every last possible dollar from a popular film. It won't long before videogames became as common as the requisite t-shirts, action figures, lunch boxes and fast food promotions for big name movies. As a general rule, games based on popular movie licenses have sold too much on said license, inundating gamers with an inferior product and expecting them to buy it anyway. While good movies and bad games are no longer mutually exclusive, gamers should still approach with caution.

Publisher: Vivendi Universal Games **Developer:** Saffire Studios **Price:** \$29.99 / £9.99 **Teen**
Platforms: Xbox, PS2

Van Helsing

Van Helsing puts gamers in control of the movie's hero as they take him through his quest to vanquish Louis Dracula and unlock the secrets of his past. High production values, some neat side missions and a few interesting plot elements suggest that Saffire Studios was aiming to make the game more than the sum of its license. The missions on the whole are pretty basic and compensate rather poorly with all manner of other worldy features like goggles and the usual weirdy elements along with some simple puzzle elements. A functional fighting system, melee and ranged weapons, upgradeable abilities and the fact that certain creatures are immune to certain distance attacks serve to push Van Helsing just over the curb from mediocre button masher to hectic combat game. Best battles (apart from the likes of Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein) add some interest to the combat.

Publisher: Vivendi Universal Games **Developer:** Backbone Studios **Price:** \$59.99 / £39.99 **Mature**
Platforms: Xbox

Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay

Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay is a fairly in videogame-based on a movie license, rather than relish the events of the film, Escape from Butcher Bay is a prequel to Chronicles of Riddick the movie and a really good game to boot.

Part well-tuned shooter part first-person action adventure game, Butcher Bay's main character Riddick is voiced by the star of the film, Vin Diesel, to generally good result.

Gamers start the game (following some lengthy cut scenes intro) after being transported to the maximum security Butcher Bay prison, set in a gritty dystopian future.

In a twist to standard FPS gameplay, players don't just take out a guard that picks up his gun and start laying waste. Guns are coded such that only those in the prison database of guards can wield them. It's a little frustrating at times but keeps Butcher Bay from being just another in the long line of gory bullet spongers and reinforces the fact that gamers have to use stealth in some places as opposed to brute force and bullets.

Butcher Bay takes gamers through gritty environments and drops them into some interesting scenarios. For example, part way through the game, players are dumped into general population of a prison camp mixing camp. With all belongings confiscated, players have to climb through the criminal ranks, performing hits, running errands, picking fights, and bartering for goods (like the ever popular prison shiv) in order to progress.

Publisher: Electronic Arts **Developer:** Electronic Arts UK **Price:** \$59.99 / £39.99 **Everyone**
Platforms: Xbox, PS2, GameCube, PC

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

J.K. Rowling has captivated children and adults alike the world over with her financial success of a young and gifted wizard named Harry Potter. Unfortunately, readers and moviegoers seem to be disappointed with Harry at a most recent gaming outing.

Prisoner of Azkaban, in attempting to translate some of the events from the movie, comes up short, rather than take some creative license, the game sticks players into a well produced but somewhat lame retelling of the events of the film.

Game is complete standard item gathering, objective finding, and simple puzzle solving missions in their travels through Harry's world. There is some interest to be found in the form of magic duels and killing magic creatures, but unfortunately, not enough.

By Andrew Mason-Cropper



Old-school console gaming

without the console

Yeah, yeah, your PlayStation, Xbox, and Game Cubes are fun and all, but there's still something about the old-school arcade games that never really grew old. In the early days of arcade-style videogames, the concepts were pretty simple, usually no more than shoot and shoot. The graphics were nothing to write home about either, featuring somewhat blocky blobs of colour moving around the screen. But the games were still a lot of fun, probably because of the simplicity rather than despite it. After all, the first home gaming consoles were sometimes even cruder, but were fun too.

Despite the preference of high-end consoles featuring complex and well-rendered games that draw players into the 3D action, Jakks Pacific (www.jakksgames.com) believes there's still room for the classics. Rather than designing the old games for play on a new gaming console, Jakks Pacific has packaged them in arcade-looking joystick units powered by four AA batteries and plugs directly into your TV (no console required — just plug and play).

The Atari joystick is almost identical to the squared-off joysticks that came with the original console. Once you plug it into your television (using the composite video and mono audio jacks that come right out of the back of the joystick), you can select one of 20 classic games, including *Adventure*, *Asteroids*, *Breakout*, *Centipede*, *Circus Atari*, *Gravitar*, *Missile Command*, *Pong*, *Real Sports*, *Tennis*, *Video Football*, and *Video Bowling*. Each game uses exactly the same data as the original, so you swear that

you're actually playing on an Atari 2600 console. It has an estimated retail price of \$26*.

While the Atari 2600 was a thing of joy for many gamers, a contingent of players swore that *Atari* games for the 2600 were the superior choice. The *Atari* joystick controller also has a classic design: the rounded joystick with the fire button on top. Inside are *Atari* games, *Boxing*, *Crackout*, *Freeway*, *Grand Prix*, *Ice Hockey*, *Pitfall*, *River Raid*, *Spider Fighter*, and *Tennis*. This one will cost about \$33*.

My favourite, for a few reasons, is the *Namco* joystick. It has a classic arcade-style joystick with the metal rod topped by the colourful plastic ball, and though it only comes with five games, they are all killers: *Bottleman*, *Big Oug*, *Galsian*, *Pac-Man*, and *Rally X*. Each game comes straight from the arcade files, which means you are truly playing *Pac-Man* on your television, rather than one of the many cheap imitations that have appeared on various consoles over the years. Again, the *Namco* joystick will cost about \$33*.

All of these controllers (as well as a special *Spongoball* *SquarePegs* game for the kids) are available now. Keep your eyes open mid-summer for a new game: *Spedman* (five games), *Archie Football* (three games), and *Big Pac-Man* (with four additional *Namco* games). Also shipping around the same time will be the *Atari* *Puddle*, which will feature 10 games that work best with a paddle-style controller.

By Sean Connolly



Top: *Atari* joystick
Middle: *Namco*
Bottom: *Spongoball*

*Converted from US\$70 (Atari), US\$25 (Atari/Namco)

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